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Child safety group finds 500 online ‘games’ role-playing rape and incest

Children are able to role-play as a rapist by accessing 500 online ‘games’ promoting rape, incest and child abuse, a safety investigation has revealed.

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Violent video games have morphed into online ‘games’ depicting rape, child abuse and incest. Picture: iStock

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Children are able to role-play as a rapist by accessing 500 online “games” promoting rape, incest and child abuse, a safety investigation has revealed.

Collective Shout, which advocates against “sexploitation”, is demanding credit card companies and PayPal block payments for games with themes of sexual violence.

It has detected 500 games featuring the violent sexual torture of women and children, accessed on the Steam and Itch.io gaming platforms.

“These games endorsing men’s sexualised abuse and torture of women and girls fly in the face of efforts to address violence against women,” it states in an open letter co-signed by the National Centre on Sexual Exploitation (US) and former Taskforce Argos child abuse detective Jon Rouse.

“We do not see how facilitating payment transactions and deriving financial benefit from these violent and unethical games (are) consistent with your corporate values and mission statements.”

The letter has been sent to executives from seven payment platforms including Visa, PayPal and MasterCard.

Collective Shout founder Melinda Tankard Reist said children needed only to tick a box stating they were over 18 to access the paid games.

“In some of them you walk around and rape as many women as you can find,” she said.

“They depict extreme torture and violation of women, and one promotes incest between a father and twin daughters. Women are held hostage and tortured – and we wonder why we’ve got a problem with violence against women.”

Ms Tankard Reist said the rape-simulation games were aimed at boys. “We’re spending millions of dollars on respect and consent education in schools, but these are highly interactive first-person rape-simulation games for boys to play,” she said.

Collective Shout founder Melinda Tankard Reist has written to credit card companies and PayPal demanding they choke the supply of money to online ‘games’ depicting sexual exploitation. Picture: Gary Ramage / NewsWire

Ms Tankard Reist said credit card companies, which process online payments for the games, “are taking a cut of the profit from normalising rape and incest and torturing women and children for entertainment”.

A MasterCard spokesman said the company had “zero tolerance for illegal activity on our network” but had not been sent evidence by Collective Shout.

“When specific instances of potentially unlawful or illegal activity are identified, we investigate the allegations so that the appropriate action can be taken,” he said.

“We have not received the evidence or materials noted in the letter but will investigate the claims upon receipt.”

A PayPal spokesperson said: “PayPal is committed to maintaining a safe platform for its customers. We have a zero-tolerance policy towards any illegal activity. Any accounts found to be associated with illegal activity will be closed.”

Visa and Steam were also contacted for comment but did not respond in time for publication.

Collective Shout found 232 titles on Steam in a search for games using the term rape. One game involved reincarnation to rape all other players in the game. The game’s developers note “the game contains scenes of non-consensual sexual activity”.

In another game, men abduct women, hold them hostage and rape and sexually torture them. The developer states it contains “graphic content of nudity, forced sexual violence, sexual assault … and is not suitable for all ages”.

Another game involves the player setting up hidden surveillance cameras to record a female neighbour performing sex acts.

Collective Shout found 149 online interactive games involving incest, including one in which the player adopts the role of a father abusing his twin daughters.

Another game available on Steam is “about a woman who sexually preys on her nephew”. Its description includes: “What’s a little skinship between family?”

Collective Shout already has forced the developers of a rape and incest simulation game, No Mercy, to withdraw it from gaming platforms after 70,000 people worldwide signed a petition for it to be banned.

Ms Tankard Reist said Steam had refused to ban the game before the developer withdrew it.

She said payment gateways could choke funding from the sexually violent games by banning payments.

“They are big companies that can afford to do due diligence, they need red flag alerts,” she said.

Child safety and law enforcement experts – including National Children’s Commissioner Anne Hollonds, child sexual abuse survivor and former Australian of the Year Grace Tame, and Bravehearts chief executive Alison Geale – will meet at Parliament House in Canberra on Thursday to discuss the growing threat of artificial intelligence being used to facilitate child sexual exploitation.

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